Other voices

Mooing puppy campaign conceals second agenda

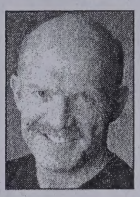
By BILL MAIER
FOCUS ON THE FAMILY

Evolutionary biologists from every corner of the world are heading to Colorado Springs. They're coming here to examine an amazing new species discovered right in our backyard: a dog that moos. It won't be long before photographers from the National Enquirer and the Weekly World News arrive as well. A mooing dog, after all, would sell a lot of papers.

But it also sells something else — at least as it's being presented in a Springs-centered ad campaign paid for by Denver's Gill Foundation, a gay advocacy organization. It sells a lie. Sure, it's a cute lie; everybody loves little wide-eyed puppies. But what the puppy on the billboards and lamp-post signs — not to mention the theater, TV, radio and newspaper ads — is selling is the notion that homosexuality is genetically determined, hardwired into us at birth like blue eyes or left-handedness. And that's about as rooted in reality as a dog that moos like a cow.

The truth is, no one is born gay. A variety of complex environmental, social and temperamental factors can coalesce into leading men and women to be attracted to the same sex. The process is different for every person, and it's certainly not a choice in the sense that a person wakes up one day and says, "You know, this is as good a morning as ever to be gay." But neither is there any credible scientific evidence that homosexuality is an inborn, immutable trait. In fact, in its "Fact Sheet on Gay Lesbian Bisexual Issues," the American Psychiatric Association clearly states: "to date there are no replicated scientific studies supporting any specific biological etiology for homosexuality."

There's also no evidence that same-sex attraction is a fixed, unchangeable characteristic like race or ethnicity. If you're born black or Hispanic, you're gonna be black or Hispanic for the rest of your life. But thousands of men and women, including several friends of mine who work at Focus on the Family, have walked away from homosexuality after becoming dissatisfied with the lifestyle they were living. Many have gone on to marry someone of the opposite sex and have children — irrefutable evidence that people are no more born gay than dogs are born to make noises like cows.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You also may have heard the Gill folks, as part of this mooing-dog business, pose this question to heterosexuals, "When did you decide to be straight?" The answer to that, of course, is that we didn't — that's the way we were made. We no more choose to be attracted to those of the opposite sex than we choose to have our hair grow. It just happens, for the vast majority of us — about 98 percent of Americans. And just like a complex array of circumstances can lead someone who is born heterosexual to be attracted to the same sex, a whole lot of factors can lead somebody's hair to stop growing — heredity, stress, advancing age. Trust me, I know.

The bottom line in all of this, of course, has nothing to do with dogs and cows and the noises they make. It's about the noise the Gill Foundation is making in its effort to change the definition of marriage in Colorado. The hope is that if you buy the notion that some dogs are just born to moo, you'll also buy their campaign to redefine marriage.

Every time one of the ads airs or one of the downtown banners is seen, it brings the foundation a step closer to its goals: Persuading you to reject a constitutional amendment that would define marriage as the union of one man and one woman; or, failing that, getting you to approve "domestic partnerships" for same-sex couples — a fancy phrase for what amounts to counterfeit marriage.

Simon LeVay, one of the nation's leading gay scientists, has stated that "people who think gays and lesbians are born that way are also more likely to support gay rights." That's why the Gill Foundation is spending a lot of money to convince us that homosexuality is inborn. We won't know until the Nov. 7 election whether their terribly cute, terribly misleading advertising campaign has succeeded. If it does, though, it will be a dog-gone shame for those of us who call Colorado home.

Maier is a child and family psychologist and serves as vice-president and psychologist in residence at Focus on the Family. He is co-author of "Marriage on Trial: The Case Against Same-Sex Marriage and Parenting."